

STUDY GUIDE

OPEN FOCUS™ TAPES, COMPACT DISC (CD) TRAINING SERIES

This study guide is intended to serve as an introduction to a unique procedure called OPEN FOCUS™ training. The approach and techniques were developed out of a series of experiments conducted over a thirty year period, in the area of EEG biofeedback (also called neurofeedback) training and psychotherapeutic applications of neurofeedback, and particularly brain synchrony training. The technique has some similarities with meditative procedures and other imagery techniques. However, it is a unique goal in OPEN FOCUS training to develop a series of “objectless images” which facilitate the distribution of one’s attention between and among various regions of the body and among various other sense modalities of experience. With continued practice, OPEN FOCUS training is designed to lead one to a simultaneous awareness of the totality of available experience and the background of objectlessness from which it emerges and into which it dissolves. The goal of OPEN FOCUS training is the effortless processing of awareness in which no one type of attention, or aspect of simultaneous experience is weighted more heavily than any other part. OPEN FOCUS is an inclusive awareness which encompasses narrow, diffuse, separate and immersed attention simultaneously along with an awareness of how one is attending.

The OPEN FOCUS training exercises, presented on the sets of audio cassettes and CD’s, which this study guide accompanies, were developed by and are narrated by the originator of this technique, Les Fehmi, Ph.D., for use with his students and clients at the Princeton Biofeedback Centre. These exercises and applications of the technique have been derived from, and developed to work in conjunction with neurobiofeedback for the peak performance training of artists, athletes, meditators, business professionals, lay persons and client populations in stress management as well as for personal and transpersonal growth. The exercises are used with or without neurofeedback, since the exercises serve as a powerful and independent training technique for enhancing attentional flexibility, mental, emotional and spiritual integration, and in the treatment of a number of functional or stress related disorders. A major application of the exercises is for dissolving physical and emotional pain and related to stress.

OPEN FOCUS exercises consist of a series of questions which are designed to stimulate your imagination of objectless experience (the space between and around objects), and to broaden attentional scope in an effortless and relaxed way. For example, one question is “*can you imagine the distance or space between your eyes?*” By distributing attention over a distance, volume, region or space in the body, one naturally lessens one’s grip on focal internal and external sensations, reduces the effort associated with the apprehension of a limited focus of objective attention. Because space is the absence of matter and sensation, it cannot be grasped in the same way that sensory objects can. Any amount of effort is counter productive in that the effort is experienced more prominently than the sense of absence which is space. The sensory experience of effort over shadows the sense of absence which is space.

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Spreading one's attention over an objectless distance, region or space in the body also permits the release into consciousness of sensations, perceptions, memories, feelings and emotions stored within that body region. Thus, the scope of one's focus of attention is effortlessly broadened and simultaneity of experience may continue unimpeded. This orientation toward an apprehension of space also encourages a reduction in objective attention in favor of absorbed attention since the experience of space cannot be readily gripped and objectified.

Distributing and broadening one's attentional focus permits and facilitates the integration and diffusion of positive and negative focal experiences. By cultivating the permissive conditions for the diffusion and integration of focal experiences, OPEN FOCUS practice is especially valuable in the reduction of anxiety, anger, and tension and associated states of self-consciousness. As integration proceeds during the practice session and over sessions, one dissolves ordinary self-consciousness and the awareness of time and space. For example, sitting gently erect, but not tense, one may begin to practice and seemingly finish only a few moments later, when in fact, the practice had lasted 20 minutes or more. One can tell, from body posture feedback and by lightness, clarity, and energy which are subsequently experienced, that ordinary sleep had not intervened. This state of integration or absorption which is associated with movement between narrow focus of attention, diffuse attention, objective attention, No-Time or absorptive attention, and finally the simultaneous integration of these forms of attention, represented by the term OPEN FOCUS, is the goal of the training procedure. (See the OPEN FOCUS Handbook for further discussion of this topic).

Etiology of Functional Tension

From the time we begin to be initiated into social activities, we are exhorted to “*pay attention*” to “*try to focus*” on what we are doing, to “*watch out*” and to “*be careful.*” These and other similar phrases communicate to us that we should make an **effort** to focus on certain stimuli to the **exclusion** of other available stimuli. That is, we are trained to try to deny, repress or resist the distraction or attraction of certain stimulation in favor of focusing upon those aspects of our environmental stimulation which are of survival value or which our society or family considers more important. In addition, the use of narrow focus is reinforced independently. Many of our personal gratifications, both in experience and performance, result from our learning how to narrow and direct our attention in order to amplify certain experiences at the expense of others. It is a necessary and valuable process of maturation that an individual learns to focus his attention in order to magnify certain aspects of his experience and to consider them in an ordered sequence. Many complex and subtle tasks would be impossible to learn or perform if we had not developed this ability to narrowly focus our attention and to execute steps in order. This ability to narrow one's focus underlies and makes possible goal-oriented behavior. Particularly in our performance-oriented society, which is technologically and socially complex, the occasions for the appropriate use of narrowly focused attention and sequential behavior occurs frequently, even continually for many persons. Thus, the effort expended in the development and continuous use of narrow focus gradually leads to a habit or fixedness of its use.

Narrow focus, in its common usage, represents the inhibition or repression of most modalities of sensation in favor of attention to and amplification of a limited number of sensations in one or a few sense modalities. When one habitually functions in the mode of

narrow focus, this repression, which is physiologically represented as tension, accumulates. As a result of this increasing chronic tension, one gradually loses his ability to allow his attention to broaden again to include a wider scope of awareness. Since in our environment, since there is ubiquitous direction to, apparent need for, and reinforcement for narrow focus, and since narrowness of focus becomes the habitual mode of attention, many functional individuals in modern society have gradually accumulated physical and mental tension of which they are unaware. Thus, many so-called “*symptoms of stress*” actually result from and reflect this rigidity of attention, habitual rigidity of scope or field of attention, narrow focus.

When one practices OPEN FOCUS training with the use of the audio cassettes or CD’s, OPEN FOCUS and “*No-Time*” are facilitated through experiencing a series of questions which are designed to broaden one’s field of focus. Each question is organized to facilitate the gradual and systematic expansion of one’s field of awareness. It is the main thesis here that, as one develops the ability to enter, deepen, and maintain integrational states of attention, such as OPEN FOCUS and “*No-Time*” there is a dissipation of tension which has accumulated as a result of habitually functioning in narrow focused attention. The resultant facilitation of physiological functioning, which is concomitant with OPEN FOCUS, leads to a remission of symptoms.

OPEN FOCUS practice facilitates the permissive conditions for symptom remission and release of tensions in spite of the fact that no specific direction or suggestion to these ends has been incorporated as part of the exercise. Thus, stress related migraine and tension headaches, and other body pains with similar high levels of intensity, dissolve even when no specific suggestion to relax or release is made during the OPEN FOCUS exercises. Similarly, even in the absence of specific instructions, hand-warming occurs in individuals with cold hands; after some practice, blood pressure and heart rate have declined in many individuals in which they were previously high; hands show less sweat gland activity. A general reduction in experienced anxiety and tension is noted by persons practicing the exercises, again, even though no suggestion is made that such a result should occur.

The way we attend does affect us in every waking activity throughout our functional day. Thus, the disposition of attention, more than any other process or behavior over which we can learn to manifest voluntary control, directly governs our state of mental and physiological well-being. The OPEN FOCUS training series was specifically designed to facilitate the learning and practice of attentional flexibility.

The above background is presented for those interested in the broad rationale for OPEN FOCUS practice. You do not need to understand or concern yourself with the above rationale in order for these tapes or CD’s to provide symptom relief, the occasion for the effective practice of attentional flexibility, and for you to progress in the training process. Your progress depends exclusively upon the quality and frequency of your practice, which are further discussed below. Multichannel phase synchrony neurofeedback can optimize practice.

OPEN FOCUS EXERCISES

Several uniquely designed OPEN FOCUS exercises are presented for your experience and practice. The tapes or CD's are described separately below. The OPEN FOCUS tapes or CD's form a hierarchic system which consists of an introduction to the procedure in verbal form, followed by a series of tapes or CD's leading from the simplest beginning exercises to more advanced tapes. Tape and CD #6 and tape and CD #7 focus on the dissolving of physical or emotional pain or other sensory experiences. The general instructions for approaching the OPEN FOCUS exercises are given below and are repeated on the tape or CD #2 entitled "**Head and Hands**". Two other introductory tapes or CD's are recommended before engaging in actual practice of the OPEN FOCUS exercises. They are "**Introduction to OPEN FOCUS**" (tape #0) and followed by "**Introduction to OPEN FOCUS Practice**" (tape #1). The latter two introductory programs (on tapes # 0 and 1) are also both contained on CD#1.

OPEN FOCUS Instructions (Presented on the beginning of exercise #2)

The OPEN FOCUS exercise consists of a series of questions about your ability to imagine certain experiences. Can you imagine letting your mind and body naturally respond to the questions, without giving any particular effort to achieving any one of these images or experiences. For example, when the tape asks "*can you imagine the distance between your eyes?*" you might naturally experience your eyes and then let your imagination or focus of attention flow to the sensations in the region between your eyes and imagine the area or volume or distance or space between your eyes. The objective is **not** to come up with some number or other abstraction, such as "there are two inches between my eyes." The objective is to very gently experience or imagine that distance or region between your eyes. The purpose of the question is to provide the stimulus to gently experience the physical or emotional feelings which are present in the region defined by the question. Ideally, the questions are designed to create the permissive condition for the listener to experience the sensations between points and within modalities of sensory experience. The listener is not encouraged to trace anatomical or geometric pathways via visual imagery. The addition of visual imagery to direct sensation or feeling is encouraged. However, the substitution of visual imagery for other forms of direct sensation, particularly feeling, is not recommended. You initially may imagine, or experience, the distance as a very small region or vague feeling and the distance then might expand or change as you continue to maintain your attention or orientation in that region. The experience often changes with continued practice. Your opening awareness of all your emerging experiences is a continuing process and will in fact develop and change within a given session or over several sessions. It will also continue to change as you progress through the hierarchic series of tapes. There will be approximately 15 to 30 seconds between questions and for that period you should maintain your attention upon the object of the last question asked. If you have any difficulty imagining any particular image or experience, don't let that trouble you. Just let your experience evolve naturally without effort to make it fit any preconception that you might have. If nothing particular seems to happen, or if your mind wanders, don't be disturbed. This is often the case in early training and also in later stages of the practice of any mind-body discipline. In the event that you happen to notice that your attention has wandered and is focused upon some thought, image or other region of feeling, neither resist nor encourage this process merely allow your attentional focus to expand to include a multi-sensory peripheral awareness

and the feeling image of the current OPEN FOCUS question in addition to the perception to which your mind has wandered to and is now centered upon.

While most persons find it helpful to close their eyes while practicing, after some experience is gained, the practice may be done with eyes open or half open. Practicing with eyes fully or partially open enhances the integration of OPEN FOCUS into daily life situations. A relatively erect body posture is recommended, sitting or standing. Reclining positions often are not effective after some period of practice, since they encourage the onset of sleep. Although one may drift in and out of sleep during the early developmental stages in the course of practice, deep sleep and the associated loss of muscle tone are to be avoided. Finally, you need not respond overtly in any way to the questions. Your response will be whatever happens to your imagery or experience when the question is asked.

RELEASE PHENOMENA

As with other techniques which create the permissive conditions for general self-integration, practitioners often report what are called “*release phenomena.*” Release phenomena may take the form of perceptual anomalies, shooting pains, jerks, tremors, numb or tingling feelings, fatigue, anxiety, perspiration, thoughts, memories, feeling or emotional experiences which spontaneously come into consciousness. The practitioner may experience these phenomena as pleasant or disturbing. The derivation of release phenomena is similar to the derivation of experiences of pain or pleasure which occur in daily life **after** a stressful physical or emotional ordeal, at a time when one can let go and relax. For instance, in the excitement of an accident, one may be bruised or injured, but discover this and the associated pain only later as the excitement abates. The occurrence of release phenomena indicates that the practice is effective in dissolving inhibition and tension. When such experiences occur, simply witness them without judgment, if possible, and include them into your OPEN FOCUS. Since OPEN FOCUS practice consists of distributing one’s awareness over all available experience simultaneously, an acceptance of unusual or unpleasant release phenomena is facilitated more than would be possible with narrowly focalized attention. Narrow focus effectively amplifies such experiences. The wider the stream of conscious phenomena, the less likely it is that a new release phenomenon will be exclusively focused upon and thereby become overwhelming. As the scope of attention widens, the integration of release phenomena becomes easier, more immediate and more complete.

Most practitioners do not experience very intense release phenomena. For these persons, practice and the integration process evolves gradually, continuously, and almost imperceptible toward well-being and attentional flexibility. However, if as a result of a release phenomenon, you become uncomfortable beyond your capacity to persist in your practice during a particular session, then in that case, consider terminating the session and return to practice at a later time. Since each release represents an opportunity for integration, termination of the session should not be undertaken unless this becomes necessary. In order to avoid termination of the session, it may be possible to complete the session with eyes open, or by utilizing the exercises contained in Exercise #6 or #7, “*Dissolving Pain.*” In any event, integration will spontaneously continue between sessions and in subsequent sessions. The less you resist the experience, the more you broaden your attention around the experience to include space and other sensations, the more pleasant, rapid and complete will be the integration process.

DESCRIPTION OF EXERCISES

Exercise #1 ***“Introduction to OPEN FOCUS”*** (51:40 minutes) - This program describes the circumstances out of which the originator of the OPEN FOCUS attention training process experienced his kidney stone pain and witnessed the importance of how he paid attention to it. The various types of attention are accessible by persons who practice the programs of attention training which are presented on the following tapes and CD's. The most impactful of these circumstances is associated with a dramatic, instantaneous dissolution, complete elimination of pain, for example, kidney stone pain.

Exercise #1 ***“Introduction to Practice”*** (27:19 minutes) - This program consists of a live session in which a client is introduced to the process of practice itself, the way one listens to and participates in the audio exercises. It is recommended that ***“Introduction to Practice”*** be listened to at least twice before proceeding to the following exercises. Also recommended is the listening to ***“Introduction to Practice”*** once a week thereafter. It takes-on additional meaning with repeated practice.

New users of the OPEN FOCUS exercise should begin practice sessions by listening to this tape or CD#1 and by reading this study guide periodically. A subtle appreciation of the ***“how”*** of effective practice is deserving of your most careful attention. The training exercises are designed to produce a broadening of attentional scope and flexibility. However, a compulsive and effortful goal orientation, that is, trying hard to do or imagine what is asked of you, will reduce the effectiveness of your practice. The most effective practice occurs when you **let** yourself respond to the questions effortlessly and accept any response which may spontaneously emerge. During the practice session take no responsibility for the outcome of your practice. Let your effortless, spontaneous imagination guide your multi-sensory response.

Exercise #2 ***“Head and Hands”*** (34:36 minutes) - This is the basic introductory program of the OPEN FOCUS exercises. It is oriented toward the head, neck, shoulders, arms, and hands. It may be used in practice until you are familiar with the training process and until the initial effects of integration and relaxation are experienced. (See ***“Pacing of Practice”*** for further information about how to use this and subsequent programs). (The ***Two-Cassette Program*** **includes** programs #2 on the first side of tapes one and program #3 on side two. Programs #4 and #7 are presented on sides three and four respectively on tape two.)

Exercise #3 ***“Long Form”*** (36 minutes) - This exercise leads the trainee for the first time into the imagery and experience of a full OPEN FOCUS of all available experience. This exercise may be used as desired to deepen the experience of the OPEN FOCUS and/or **NO-TIME** experience (see below). Optimum use of programs #4 and #5 depends upon mastery of the attentional process encouraged by practice using this program and program #2.

Exercise #4 ***“Short Form”*** (24:15 minutes) - This program is approximately two-thirds the duration of the **LONG FORM** program (#3) and guides the trainee more quickly into OPEN FOCUS. It is to be used after the trainee is familiar with the experience of the OPEN FOCUS and is able to enter OPEN FOCUS easily or can be used when available time for practice is limited.

Exercise #5 **“General Practice”** (28:08 minutes) - This program and subsequent programs are designed for the more advanced student who is guided into OPEN FOCUS using imagery derived from atomic theory and observation. The practitioner is encouraged to appreciate that all atoms and matter are mostly space and that even sensory experience is in fact permeated by space. Thus, one is invited to experience the presence of objects and sensations permeated by space. One comes to the experience that there is a unifying medium through which all matter and energy are connected, namely space. This exercise and two others are most frequently described as **“favorites”** or **“most effective”** for our clients. This may be because these exercises make more references to space than the others.

Exercise #6 **“Dissolving Physical & Emotional Pain”** (22:26 minutes) - (Also see Program #7) Program #6 differs from Program #7 in its approach to the dissolution of pain. Whereas tape # 6 encourages the attender to narrow his or her focus and dive into the pain and then open and bring pain into a more diffuse awareness and OPEN FOCUS after centering oneself in the heart of the pain. Tape #7 encourages a full OPEN FOCUS experience before one moves into and merges with the pain. This approach allows the pain to diffuse into surrounding awareness while the entering process is occurring. This has the advantage of decreasing the power of the pain to affect the perceiver since the pain remains embedded in the totality of awareness and remains a small percentage of that totality. This approach to dissolving pain requires less courage than the dissolving pain process of Tape #6.

Exercise #7 **“Dissolving Pain and Other Experience”** (29:22 minutes) - This program is designed to facilitate the management of all types of conscious experience through control of attention. This tape may be used specifically to dissolve or diffuse unpleasant mental or physical experiences. The approach to physical pain presented on this tape is based on the finding that attentional alternation between a narrow focus upon an objectified experience and **melting into** and merging with that experience, and then bringing it into an on-going OPEN FOCUS, often leads to the reduction or dissolution of the experience. Integrating a focal physical or emotional pain into the flow of on-going OPEN FOCUS results in the diffusion of its intensity and judged importance or affect. Here, and on the exercise, the word “pain” is used in its most general sense and is meant to include experiences of all kinds. In addition to sharp and dull pain, other forms of experience may be dissolved, such as fatigue, depression, anxiety, guilt, tension, anger or other emotions, body feelings, obsessive thought patterns, compulsions, and mental attitudes or states of mind. The basic notion here is that pain and other forms of “disease” and tension are maintained because of a fixation or rigidity of focal attention either upon or directed away from the experience. This **“Dissolving Pain”** exercise is designed to provide an opportunity to practice attentional flexibility and to dissolve an existing fixation or focal attention, thus, re-establishing the flow of on-going experience, called OPEN FOCUS. In fact, the techniques used to dissolve pain may be used to dissolve all experience including space and time. This state of unselfconsciousness is often readily achieved during practice. It may be observed retrospectively only as an awareness that the practice period had passed in what seemed like less time than was actually expended. Thus, this sense of rapid expenditure of time, or absence of a sense of time, may be used as an index of the quality of one’s practice. The efficacy of Tape #5 or CD #5 improves as facility and depth of OPEN FOCUS (as guided by Tape #'s 2, 3, 4, 5 or CD's #'s 2, 3, 4, 5) is developed.

Exercise #8 ***“Joint Space”*** (25:04 minutes) - This program begins with a heavy emphasis upon developing an experiential space in which subsequent sensations will be experienced. These subsequent sensations are related to the individual joints of the body. Attending particularly to joints facilitates the release of much unconscious stress and has been helpful for a diverse population and has been found to be particularly helpful for persons experiencing joint pain.

Exercise #9 ***“Heart Centered OPEN FOCUS”*** (26:08 minutes) - The heart referent in this exercise may be viewed as one of many possible referents, e.g., other body parts, functions, feelings or body locations. When you hear the word heart, for example, you may wish to substitute other words such as navel, throat, etc., or localized emotions such as fear in the chest, sadness in the jaw, etc. This program emphasizes a body location or body structure or feeling or function as a repetitive referent among the many possible simultaneous senses and sensations with which we can become aware. Our habit is to ignore certain sensations during much of our waking life. Thus, centering upon a here-to-fore neglected referent in our multi sensory awareness during practice can release tension and improve function.

Exercise #10 ***“Localizing Feeling, Emotion & Pain”*** (27:04 minutes) - This program helps one localize feelings and emotions that one ordinarily experiences as occurring in the mind, or all over, or everywhere. Once body localization is established, alternating attention styles easily clear emotion or feeling by using one of the dissolving pain exercises. Dissolving pain is not difficult after pain, emotion or feeling is fully localized.

Exercise #11 ***“How Am I Paying Attention”*** (20:05 minutes) - This program provides a series of questions which relate to awareness of how we pay attention, attention-to-attention. This exercise represents the backbone of the method in that, if one can become aware of the various dimensions and styles of attention referred to in the questions, (narrow, diffuse, objective and merged attention) then one has established a significant rapport with one’s own ability to pay attention. Attentional flexibility is guided in all of the seven sense modalities referred to in this exercise (seeing, hearing, feeling, tasting, smelling, thinking and the sense of time).

Exercise #12 ***“Transfer of OPEN FOCUS to Daily Life”*** (28:58 minutes) - This program helps develop an OPEN FOCUS in short period of time and then proceeds to describe or mention various situations in the lives of most people in which one can imagine using OPEN FOCUS to enhance productivity and a sense of well-being. This tape represents a method for effortless programming of oneself to enter into OPEN FOCUS, to release habitual narrow focused, objective styles of attending, in every day life.

Exercise #13 ***“Feeling in OPEN FOCUS”*** (31:30 minutes) - This program emphasizes feeling as a central experience among the many simultaneous senses to which we may become aware. Our habit is to ignore feeling in favor of other sensations during much of our waking life. Thus, including feeling, and even centering feeling in our all around awareness during practice, pays significant dividends. This exercise is considered by many of our clients as being particularly effective in facilitating the release of stress and promoting OPEN FOCUS. Listening to this program while walking or otherwise exercising has been found to be particularly effective.

Exercise #14 “*Listening in OPEN FOCUS*” (32.06 minutes) - This program emphasizes listening as a central experience among the many simultaneous senses to which we may become aware. Our habit is to ignore one or more sensations in favor of other sensations during much of our waking life. Thus, including listening and centering listening in our awareness during practice pays significant dividends. This exercise and the others of this type (13, 15 & 16) is considered by many of our clients as being particularly effective in facilitating the release of stress and promoting OPEN FOCUS (also beneficial during exercise).

Exercise #15 “*Thinking in OPEN FOCUS*” (32.04 minutes) - This program emphasizes thinking as a central experience among the many simultaneous senses to which we may become aware. Our habit is to ignore one or more sensations in favor of other sensations during much of our waking life. Thus, including thinking, and centering thinking, in our awareness during practice pays significant dividends. This exercise and the others of this type (13, 14 & 16) is considered by many of our clients as being particularly effective in facilitating the release of stress and promoting OPEN FOCUS.

Exercise #16 - “*Seeing in OPEN FOCUS*” (52 minutes) - This program emphasizes seeing as a central experience among the many simultaneous senses to which we may become aware. Our habit is to ignore one or more sensations in favor of other sensations during much of our waking life. Thus, including seeing, and centering seeing, in our awareness during practice pays significant dividends. This exercise and the others of this type (13, 14 & 15) is considered by many of our clients as being particularly effective in facilitating the release of stress and promoting OPEN FOCUS.

Exercise #17 - “*Racquet Sports Training*” (20:37 minutes) - This program represents an application of OPEN FOCUS practice and training in the field of racquet sports. It represents an example of how one might use one’s attention to enhance racquet sport skills. Using this exercise as a model one may use similar attentional procedures or approaches in the application of OPEN FOCUS training to other sports and other fields such as business, interpersonal relations, recreation, creative processes, etc.

Exercise #18 - “*Independent Practice*” (19:49 minutes) - Program #18 is designed for the advanced student and is used primarily as a timing tape for daily OPEN FOCUS practice sessions. The advanced student is guided into OPEN FOCUS attention by a few general OPEN FOCUS attention questions and then the remainder of the tape or CD is quiet until near the end of a 20 minute period. It has been the experience of users of the technique that this “*Independent Practice*” exercise is of special value to students who have only a minimum of time available for practice, and to those who prefer to pace themselves during the practice without verbal guidance from the tape. This tape circumvents the need for timers or other intrusive arousing techniques. It maintains the continuity of the practice as developed throughout the hierarchy of the other five tapes. This exercise also represents a natural step in the gradual transition to fully independent practice during every day activities. Advanced practitioners can use program #18 to develop their ability to enter OPEN FOCUS rapidly and effortlessly. The ability to enter OPEN FOCUS rapidly gives the practitioner the capability to engage in many activities while in OPEN FOCUS. In particular, advanced practitioners are encouraged, when using earlier programs, to begin practicing the exercises **after** initially entering an OPEN FOCUS attention as fully as possible. Then, as one practices the program, specific exercises are

integrated into one's OPEN FOCUS attention, allowing one to more fully develop this way of attending as the exercise progresses.

Pacing of Practice

Among OPEN FOCUS providers and practitioners there are wide variations in the number of days of practice with each new exercise in the series. Perhaps three to five days using the introductory exercises (Tapes #0, #1 and #2 or CD's #1 and #2) are adequate, although let your understanding and experience serve as your guide. An ideal initial response to this and later exercises may include warming of your hands and feet, relaxation of head and body tensions, reduction of sweat gland activity, clarity, peacefulness, an experience of well-being and unselfconscious energy or effortlessness of subsequent performance. An additional week of twice daily practice using exercise #3, (*Long Form*) is usually sufficient before proceeding to other exercises. From that point on, the use of exercise #4, (*Short Form*) and exercise 8, (*Joint Space*) and subsequent programs may be paced based on the individual's own experience and intuition. A week of practice sessions with exercise #6, (*Dissolving Physical & Emotional Pain*) and exercise #7 (*Dissolving Pain and Other Experience*) are useful in order to become familiar with the new ideas and experiences presented and to develop attentional flexibility. Specific practice may be devoted to dissolution of pain at any later time whenever it may be necessary. The effective use of OPEN FOCUS attention training techniques with chronic unpleasant physical or emotional experience can require repeated experience with practice and with the technique. For example: certain persons require weeks of intensive practice to be able to use the technique for pain control effectively. On the other hand, other persons achieve relief of pain which may have existed for several years or more after only one introductory session of dissolving pain. The efficacy of exercise #'s 6 and 7 exercises to dissolve unpleasant experience is dependent upon the nature of OPEN FOCUS attention which is attained and to unify with and objectify the experience which is to be dissolved.

Excellent results have been observed with regard to the mitigation of the symptoms of stress and in the development of physical and mental well-being when OPEN FOCUS is practiced **at least** twice daily. The use of "*Long Form*" (exercise #3) as the basic entry into the OPEN FOCUS process, is preferred by many students after long term training, although its use requires more time than the shorter exercises which follow it. Practice upon arising in the morning has been reported to be the most effective and important practice of the day by many individuals. Practicing immediately after a large meal should be avoided. In any case, practice on a twice daily basis will yield results over a period of time, the duration of which will depend upon factors such as the attentional rigidity of the user at the beginning of the training. Some clients begin the training process by practicing only 5 to 10 minutes at a time, 3 or more times daily. Once having developed a convenient schedule and habit, the duration of practice can be extended as time allows. Simply breaking the set to attend narrowly has significant effects upon the reduction of stress.

CONTRAINDICATIONS

There are few contraindications to the use of the OPEN FOCUS exercises. However, patients under current medical treatment, with chronic disease or recurrent symptoms, patients using medication for hypertension, other cardiovascular disorders, endocrine and metabolic

control, or pain relief, should consult their physician or a clinician who is familiar with the interactive effect of profound mental and physical stress reduction upon medical conditions and drug therapy. Specifically, persons using insulin, thyroxin or anti-hypertensive medications are known to require regular, decremental readjustment of these medications when undergoing this or other similar procedures. Thus, frequent visits to their physicians are important and required.

Persons suffering from physical or emotional symptoms normally requiring therapeutic intervention, should not assume that OPEN FOCUS practice can be used as a replacement for treatment by a competent health care professional or therapist. In such cases, OPEN FOCUS training can often be used beneficially in conjunction with other treatment programs. In the treatment of clinical symptoms, the OPEN FOCUS training series is offered for use only under the observation and guidance of a duly trained physician, psychologist, or other health care professional. To use these OPEN FOCUS exercises for physical health reasons without proper medical pre-screening or guidance is ill advised and is to do so at your own risk.

The general effectiveness of OPEN FOCUS practice in establishing the permissive conditions for release and integration of stress related phenomena has led to its effective use in a number of situations. Among the presenting symptoms which have responded favorably to OPEN FOCUS training, in conjunction with biofeedback techniques, as a result of associated stress reduction, are the following: migraine and tension headaches; various other forms of physical pain and emotional distress, essential hypertension, rapid heart rate, diffuse anxiety and fear related tensions, manic-depressive mood swings, tics and spastic torticollis, gastrointestinal distress, insomnia, phobias, obsessive thought patterns, compulsive behavior, performance blocks, social self-consciousness, and various attentional disturbances.

Among the symptoms for which OPEN FOCUS training may only be considered as adjunctive to other forms of therapy are the various diagnostic categories of schizophrenia, so-called acting-out disorders of behavior, severe, chronic or endogenous depressions and various personality disorders associated with a lack of will or an inability to be motivated to learn or to regularly practice the OPEN FOCUS exercises.

While OPEN FOCUS training has been found to be clinically effective for the remission of certain presenting symptoms, it has been found to be equally useful for other purposes: for example, OPEN FOCUS has been used effectively in preparation for and during the birth process. College students report a reduction in test taking anxiety associated with its use. Business executives report a reduction in stress associated with decision making processes, public speaking and interpersonal relations. Advanced practitioners have been able to invoke the beneficial effects of OPEN FOCUS simply by remembering to OPEN FOCUS their attention in situations where they found themselves tense. OPEN FOCUS practice has facilitated the realization that it is not the situation that governs one's reaction, but the way in which the situation is approached or paid attention to. In any case, an increasing sense of well-being and the reduction of tension and anxiety in persons who had often not even realized that they harbored tension or anxiety before practice is associated with continued practice of OPEN FOCUS. Advanced practitioners, and on occasion, beginners, report various transpersonal experiences associated with practice. Members of the clergy are using OPEN FOCUS exercises in various ways.

In the interest of further research and development of OPEN FOCUS training, we would appreciate being informed of any research findings, therapeutic results, new applications or suggestions for improvement of the training exercises.

ORDERING INFORMATION

To order further tapes, CD's, or to receive further information about the application or use of the attention training series, contact Biofeedback Computers, Inc., 317 Mt. Lucas Road, Princeton, New Jersey 08540 (609-924-0785) or email lesfehmi@ix.netcom.com. The most recent edition of the *OPEN FOCUS Order Form* is enclosed.

Please inquire about the *OPEN FOCUS HANDBOOK* and *THE OPEN-FOCUS BRAIN, Harnessing the Power of Attention to Heal Mind and Body*, by Les Fehmi, Ph.D. and Jim Robbins, and the OPEN FOCUS Workshops presented by Dr. Les Fehmi in Princeton, New Jersey, and in various parts of the United States - call for dates and locations. Dr. Les Fehmi is available for lectures, seminars and training workshops for professional and other personnel. Inquire about the creation of special exercises for particular uses. Dr. Les Fehmi is available for telephone sessions to help localize and dissolve chronic pain, feelings and emotion.

References: Please see "*OPEN FOCUS HANDBOOK*" and *THE OPEN-FOCUS BRAIN, Harnessing the Power of Attention to Health Mind and Body*, for further discussion of the OPEN FOCUS attention training series.

